

VZCZCXRO7188
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #2471/01 1940224
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 130224Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5670
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC//NSC// PRIORITY
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002471

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2016

TAGS: [IZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: FADHILA LEADER CALLS MILITIAS DEFENSIVE MEASURE
AGAINST INSURGENTS

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARGARET M. SCOBAY, FOR REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D).

11. (C) Summary. In a July 9 meeting with poloffs, Fadhila Party General Secretary Abd al-Rahim al-Hasuna said that his party continued to consider itself a part of the Shia Coalition, despite the "unfair" outcome of the government formation process which left it without any ministries. Al-Hasuna agreed that militia activity poses a threat to Iraqi stability, but insisted that the Shia militias are primarily a defensive response to Sunni insurgent attacks. He criticized what he characterized as heavy-handed tactics used by U.S. military forces in Iraq, but expressed interest in working with the USG on economic reconstruction projects. Al-Hasuna claimed that Fadhila opposed forcing women to wear the hijab, but did not respond to the suggestion that he express this position publicly. He blamed security problems in Basra on political instability and a lack of economic progress. He said that Fadhila did not have a position on the timing of provincial elections. Al-Hasuna expressed general support for national reconciliation, but expressed opposition to offering premature amnesty to insurgents. End summary.

Fadhila Still in Coalition, But Unhappy

12. (C) On July 9, Al-Hasuna told poloffs that the Fadhila Party has been shortchanged compared to other parties in the Shia Coalition because, even though Fadhila has 15 seats in the 275-member Council of Representatives, it did not receive any ministries. He compared Fadhila's position to Dawa Tanzim, which has 13 seats in the CoR but holds three ministerial positions. He noted Fadhila still considers itself a part of the Shia Coalition, which is in turn the largest bloc in the government. Hasuna said, however, that without a ministry, it is difficult for Fadhila to accomplish its goals in the government. He particularly deplored Fadhila's "loss" of the oil ministry, noting that his party had hoped the USG would support its effort to keep the portfolio. Poloff replied that allocation of ministries had been an Iraqi decision.

Lack of Security Fosters Militias

13. (C) Al-Hasuna claimed that Fadhila forbids its members to engage in violence. He said, however, that Shia militias are a defensive measure against attacks by Sunnis. He said two conditions would hasten elimination of militias -- an end to insurgency violence and economic opportunity. Poloff replied that the Iraqi Government -- not militias -- should provide security and that security would in turn help promote

economic growth.

Mixed Views Toward USG

¶4. (C) Al-Hasuna unfavorably compared the U.S. presence in Iraq to that of the British, claiming that the British military has used a more conciliatory approach than U.S. forces. He said that U.S. forces have often used heavy-handed tactics, for example when the Karbala Provincial Council Chair was arrested because of suspected militia involvement. Poloff replied that MNF-I uses force only when absolutely necessary. On the other hand, Al-Hasuna said that he recognized the USG effort to help Iraq and would be pleased to exchange views on economic development projects, particularly in southern Iraq. (NOTE: Al-Hasuna is from Nasiriyah.)

Hijabs

¶5. (C) Poloff noted Embassy concern over reports of harassment and threats against Iraqi women who choose not to wear the hijab. Hasuna blamed such behavior on "Wahabis and Takfiris." He characterized the tolerance displayed by Islamic rulers in medieval Spain as the true face of political Islam. He stopped short, however, of agreeing to publicly express opposition to harassment of women who do not wear the hijab.

Problems in Basrah

BAGHDAD 00002471 002 OF 002

¶6. (C) Al-Hasuna said that the security problems in Basrah are at root a political problem. He predicted that no lasting security will be achieved in Basrah until an agreement is reached among the various political factions in the province. He said that an even more fundamental problem in Basrah and southern Iraq is a lack of economic progress since the 2003 liberation. He said that the people of southern Iraq have not seen concrete benefits from democracy and therefore are not committed to making the new government succeed.

Provincial Elections

¶7. (C) Al-Hasuna said that Fadhila is not yet ready to endorse a specific time for provincial elections. When elections are held, Fadhila will decide on a province-by-province basis whether to join a coalition or run independently.

Amnesty and National Reconciliation

¶8. (C) Al-Hasuna expressed general support for the Prime Minister's national reconciliation plan. He said, however, that amnesty should be delayed until after the insurgency is defeated. Al-Hasuna said that to grant amnesty while the insurgency is still active would be comparable to catching fish and then throwing them back into the water, i.e., it would allow imprisoned insurgents to resume their fight against the government.

Comment

¶9. (C) Al-Hasuna appeared keen to establish an ongoing dialogue with the USG. He repeatedly asked if we could provide him with pictures of the President's visit to Baghdad and noted that he is reading the Arabic-language edition of Alexis de Toqueville's "Democracy in America," which he received at post's July 4 reception. He is reportedly an Islamic scholar by training and still largely an unknown within his own party. He replaced Nadeem al-Jabiri (currently Fadhila's leader in the Council of Representatives) as party General Secretary in May 2006.
SATTERFIELD